





LIBRARY
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The care & treatment of the insane poor. By C. L. Robertson M.D.	1
Agricultural Progress. Drainage. By James Sanderson	2
Immigration. By Rev Charles Gibson	3
The Pollution of Rivers	4
Friendly Societies versus Beerhouse & Clubs. By Rev J. H. Stratton	5
Deaf not Dumb. By B. St. J.ickers	6
Local Speech for the Dumb. By B. St. J.ickers	7
How infection is spread through the sweating system	8
Intemperance	9
Letters on Oyster Fisheries. By W. Dell Woods	10
The Coffee Public House	11
The Ch of England Temperance Society & the ^{Recent} General Elections By Canon Ellison	12
The Ethics of Urban Tenements	13
Thrift. By Charles Roundell M.P.	14
Trades Unions. By Robert Johnson	15
To the Agriculturists of England	16
At night in a Hospital. By E. Lynn Linton	17
Vagrants & Tramps. By Sir Charles Trevelyan	18
Maintenance of Main Roads. By W. Sturges M.P.	19
Infection. By Sir J. Clarke Ferriars & Miss Highington	20
Local Option - Local Control. By Canon Ellison	21

VOCAL SPEECH FOR THE DUMB

A PAPER

ON THE

EDUCATION OF THE "DEAF AND DUMB"

"GERMAN" SYSTEM

READ APRIL 25, 1877

BEFORE

The Society of Arts

BY

B. ST J. ACKERS

With Discussion

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THIS PAPER WAS AWARDED THE SILVER MEDAL OF THE SOCIETY OF ARTS

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DEAF, NOT DUMB.

Why am I standing before you to-night? Why am I reading this paper on the 'deaf and dumb' before your honourable Society? Not as a schoolmaster wishing to bring before your notice some special method of teaching that he himself invented; not as a medical man wishing to advocate some special treatment of ear diseases; not because, in fact, I have any claim to speak in my own person as a professional practitioner, either scholastic or medical, but solely because that has happened to me which might happen to anyone here present; illness came upon my only child—its life was spared, but its hearing lost.

Great, indeed, were the difficulties we experienced in deciding on the best way of educating our child, meagre, indeed, the help we could obtain in our own country. I am desirous that others should have the benefit of our experience, so that no one need go through the terrible uncertainty and anxiety we had to endure. Our child was three months old when a severe attack of fever took away her hearing. For a year or two we kept hoping on. I even refused to enter the child in the census as 'deaf and dumb.' I would not 'brand' it as long as there was any doubt; such was my foolish pride, such is the foolish

pride, alas ! of very many ; and it is mentioned here in order to show that this, amongst other causes, makes the census returns of the 'deaf and dumb' below the real number. As soon as our child's loss of hearing was beyond question, we brought her here to London for the best medical, surgical, and educational advice. We hoped, indeed we never doubted, that we should have received the best advice about the education of our child from those of the medical profession whom we consulted. But such was not the case. Sad and disappointed, we turned to those who had devoted their lives to the education of the deaf. Here at least we expected to be assured beyond doubt of the best method on which to instruct her ; but again we were doomed to utter disappointment. We found different systems at work, and the advocates of each said very hard and bitter things of one another. Here it will be well to explain the technical terms that will be used in this paper. For want of this it is sometimes difficult to understand the meaning of much that is written and spoken on this subject, as different terms are used by various writers and speakers to express the same things, and the same terms to express different things.

'Deaf and Dumb.' Those wholly uneducated, or who cannot hear or speak, though educated or partially so.

'Deaf.' Those who cannot hear or speak before they have been educated ; or who, having been educated, are still without hearing, but can speak.

'German' System. That which is based on articulation and lip-reading.

'French' System. That which is based on a system of signs.

‘Signs.’ All, except

‘Natural Signs.’ Which I define as such as hearing persons use and can understand ; *e.g.*, ‘come,’ beckoning with the hand ; ‘go,’ motioning away with the hand ; which are really actions, not signs.

You may wonder why we did not test for ourselves the results obtained by the various methods in this country. We would willingly have done so, but the ‘German’ system had not been long enough at work to prove the value of its teaching to pupils in general after leaving school, and we were assured by the ‘French’ system teachers—the ‘old’ system, as it is so often erroneously called by Englishmen, simply because in this country it has been the longer established—that, however good the ‘German’ might appear in school, the speech and lip-reading there learnt were of no value in after life.

We could not disprove this assertion. Nay, we were inclined to believe it, for, we said to ourselves, as so many do now, ‘If it be the better method, surely it would have been adopted by such a practical nation as our own long ago.’ Of this I must speak hereafter.

It will be seen that, to persons considering this subject for the first time, as we were, it was impossible to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion—one that would leave no doubt on their minds—without going into the world to find out the truth. So, without loss of time, in August, 1872, our child being three years old, we left her with my wife’s family, and commenced investigation for ourselves. We visited some of the principal schools in each of the following countries, in the order named :—England, United States, Canada, Great Britain, Holland, Belgium,

Germany, Saxony, Bohemia, Austria, Bavaria, Switzerland, Savoy and France.

The subject before you naturally divides itself into three heads—Medical, Historical and Educational.

Time will not allow me to-night to enter upon the medical and historical aspects of the case, interesting as they are, even more so, probably, to the general public, than the educational view of the subject. This paper, however, must be confined to this latter portion of the question, viz., education.

Education.—Chiefly as bearing on the results of the different methods of education on the pupils in after life.

Let it be clearly understood that the term ‘deaf and dumb,’ as used in this and all countries where the ‘French’ system is adopted, includes the toto-congenital—those born wholly deaf; the semi-deaf—those with partial hearing; and the semi-mute—those who have spoken before loss of hearing. This term ‘deaf and dumb,’ used for such degrees and classes of affliction is very confusing; the different conditions are often misunderstood, and much evil arises therefrom.

There are three systems of teaching the deaf—‘German’; ‘French’; ‘Combined.’

The ‘German’ system teaches by articulation and lip-reading. The ‘French,’ by signs, dactylology (*i.e.* the manual alphabet), and pantomime.

Writing and pictures are, of course, common to each system. It is true that in ‘German’ system schools, natural signs are used at first, but they are dropped as soon as the pupils have learned to express their meaning in words; and, on the other hand, in ‘French’ system

schools, some few pupils are taught articulation. The 'German' system teaches the pupils from the first to think in the order of the language of their country, whereas the 'French' system teaches the pupils to think in the order of the language of signs, which is an inverted order, as far as English and all other European languages go, *e.g.* 'cart draw horse.' It also ignores particles, and other things necessary to ordinary English.

The 'Combined' method is so called because it tries to combine parts of each of the two great opposing systems. The teaching, however, being based on signs, is far nearer the 'French' than the 'German' system, though some articulation is attempted at first with each pupil,—a system which has brought, and always will bring, articulation into disrepute, for it is useless to think of teaching articulation successfully unless it be, as in the 'German' system, the basis of instruction; so that the pupil may always think and express ideas in the order of the language of his country. This is next to impossible for him to do, when taught upon any system which is based on signs. Signs are also much easier than articulation to the deaf. The two have nothing in common. The easier will always supersede the harder in the affection and practice of the pupil.

Now, it would be well, before going any further, to get rid of the idea so common amongst hearing people, that children 'deaf and dumb' are quite different from others. For instance, it is often imagined that they must be of weak intellect. This is a great mistake. True, some have not full mental development, which is not to be wondered at, when the causes of congenital and acci-

dental deafness are remembered—often it is a fever that takes away hearing and leaves mind and body in an enfeebled condition. Such, however, is just as often the case with hearing children after suffering like maladies. The brain is uninjured in the vast majority of the deaf, and is exactly the same as that of hearing children.

Another very common fallacy is that the child does not speak—is dumb—on account of some malformation of the vocal organs. Now, this is so rare a case, if indeed it exist at all, that it cannot be classed as one of the causes of dumbness. Indeed, there are but two causes, so far as I know, of absolute dumbness, viz., want of brain power, and deafness. As the latter causes dumbness only on account of want of proper education, the former is the only true cause. The term ‘deaf and dumb’ is really an unnatural and artificial one, expressing not the action of nature under favourable circumstances, but the result of neglect.

It is not uncommon to meet with dumb persons who have their hearing perfect; their dumbness arises from defect of brain. But what I have never met with, is dumbness from deafness, except through disuse of voice. There is no such thing as a child born dumb because deaf. The born deaf are at first exactly the same as hearing children; they cry, sneeze, cough, crow, laugh, aye, and talk too, like hearing children. This may seem very startling; but startling though it be, it is true. The born deaf do talk, in their own baby language, just like hearing children of the same age, only we do not understand them. What mother understands all her hearing baby says at first? But, it will be said, ‘Even if this be

so, hearing children can understand all that is said to them, and that is what deaf ones never can.' Really! Can hearing children understand all that is said to them? Then why do mothers and nurses say the same thing, over and over again, a hundred times? And when the hearing child can imitate what is said to it, does it therefore know the meaning? Does it know what 'papa' or 'mamma' mean because it can say the words? Of course not.

The objects must be shown with the words spoken, and shown over and over again, too, before the hearing child can connect the object with the spoken word; and so—exactly so—is it with the deaf child; you do not let it go on talking its own language; but just as with the hearing, you educate it to repeat certain sounds after you, and to connect those sounds (spoken words) with certain objects—only with the deaf you cannot teach through the ear and so must through the eye. It is all by imitation, as with the hearing child; it does not 'come natural,' as unthinking people so often say, either to the hearing or to the deaf.

Now, let us contrast the effect of these systems on the after life of those educated thereon. We will take the 'French' system first, as that best known in this country. I have said over and over again, and here repeat, that if the object of the education of the deaf were to fit them to live in large asylums and comfortable institutions, they should by all means be educated on the 'French' system. It is the easiest and pleasantest to the pupils, so long as they are together or with their teachers. But we know well that institution life can be but the lot of very few. Almost

all have, before long, to leave what has to them become a happy home, where everyone understands and uses the language of signs, and to take their place in the world, and earn their daily bread. Here they scarcely ever meet with anyone able to use the language of signs, and very, very few who know the finger alphabet. But it may be said, 'They have writing.' Yes, but what does this amount to?

However much knowledge or education may be justly claimed for the deaf-mute instructed upon the 'French' system of signs, still such knowledge is to hearing persons in a great measure a sealed book, by reason of the want of a proper communication between the two classes; the deaf-mute, in consequence of the peculiar nature of his instruction, which gives him language in an inverted order, has a difficulty in making himself understood by writing, and in comprehending the writing of ordinary hearing persons. His own knowledge of language is very imperfect, and few of those with whom he daily associates are sufficiently educated to read or write with comfort, and many, we know, cannot do so at all.

Now let us pass to the 'Combined' method. This is the system that Gallaudet, the first teacher of the deaf in America, found in this country, and erroneously supposed to be the 'German' method. He took this for granted, because articulation was taught. He failed to appreciate, as so many do now, the cardinal difference of these systems. It is this, that under the 'Combined' method, a system of signs is the basis of instruction, articulation being only an accomplishment, just as modern languages were taught in our old public schools, with the result we

all know ; the thing was looked upon by the boys as a ' bore,' and the knowledge (or rather want of knowledge) of these languages so gained, and the little use they were in after life, have passed into a byword.

Those thus taught never feel at home in speaking, find great difficulty in making themselves understood, and so soon cease to continue the attempt. So it is with those taught on the ' Combined ' method. Articulation is to them a ' bore,' they find people outside their schools unable to understand them, and so they, too, soon cease to make the attempt.

Thus articulation is brought into discredit, not by its being in any way unsuited to the deaf, but because it has been treated as an accomplishment.

Indeed, the case of those thus educated practically differs but little from those under the ' French ' system, but that little is not in favour of the ' Combined ' method. In examining the pupils taught on this system, we found them the least educated, and the reason was not far to seek ; for the pupils so taught were taken away from the rest to learn articulation, it may be half-an-hour a day, more or less. What were the constant remarks of the teachers? Why, that ' the articulation pupils were behind the others.' And no wonder, for whatever takes the pupil away from his companions regularly for never so short a time, be it articulation, drawing, Latin, or any other thing foreign to the ordinary work of his class, must have the effect of making him show to disadvantage with his class-mates, whose attention and time have not been disturbed. But, it may be argued, ' Could not more time be given to articulation ? ' It would be of no avail,

I reply, so long as signs constitute the basis of education, for so long will the pupils think in them rather than in articulation. In that case no good result is to be gained, because articulation will be but a foreign language, in which ease enough to be pleasant or useful will rarely be gained, an annoyance very often—a task, and will ever lead to disappointment.

A ‘foreign’ language! Is it not startling to hear English spoken of thus, in the case of English children? Yet such is English to those taught on the ‘French’ or ‘Combined’ methods. It is a foreign language to them, as we are constantly reminded by the teachers of those systems. Let us see whether such is the case with those taught on the ‘German’ system.

Here, to begin with, there is no inverted order; and, as those taught thereon have no other medium for thought than the English language, there is certainly no reason, theoretically, why their language should not be as pure as that of hearing children. This is scarcely the case at first, yet such a result is reached before leaving school, and is not lost afterwards.

I fancy I hear someone say, ‘This may be so with the semi-mute and the semi-deaf, but can it be possible with the toto-congenital, who have never heard? Are they able to make speech the means of communication with the world in general?’ Wait a minute, and I think, when you have heard a few examples of the very many cases that have come under our notice, and which we tested for ourselves, that you will acknowledge that articulation under the ‘German’ method is no mere accomplishment; but is the practical means by which those so

taught communicate, not with their fellow-pupils and teachers only, but with their hearing fellow-creatures also.

Remembering the three classes called 'deaf and dumb' in this country, let us take a few examples, all of which came under our personal notice, unless mentioned to the contrary. In these cases names and dates will not be specified, but they are at the service of any person who chooses to ask for them for the purpose of proving the accuracy of the statements contained in this paper.

I will not weary you with cases of the semi-deaf speaking, because it must be evident to all, that this class—having hearing, although not sufficient to enable them to be educated with hearing children—have ear enough to understand to a certain extent the modulations of sound. We will pass on, therefore, to the next class, the semi-mute.

The first case we will take is that of one of the daughters of a gentleman who, through his kindness to us, has become a great personal friend of my own. As soon as he heard the object of our journey, and that our child was deaf, he spared neither pains, time, nor personal exertion to help us in this matter.

His child had lost hearing, from fever, between four and five years of age. At that time there were no schools in his country on this admirable 'German' system; but the parents, convinced of the advantage of this method, made themselves acquainted with the details of instruction, which were successfully carried out in the person of their own child, as you will acknowledge when I tell you that she was able to go into shops in Germany and get

things that her father wanted, he being unable to speak the language ; and that she came to stay with us in our house in the country, and was conversed with by our friends, both at garden parties and privately, to the surprise of all who saw her.

Take another case. A lady of great wealth had four children ; fever came and struck down three ; two died, the other lived, but her hearing was totally lost. She was then four years of age. The poor mother, as might be expected, was overwhelmed with grief, and, for twelve months was herself ill, and unable to attend to the education of her poor little deaf child. It was not until the latter was between five and six years of age, twelve months after losing hearing, that the mother attempted to educate her at all. Her speech was almost gone ; indeed, to such an extent was this the case, that she had but one word left, a word natural to a child, ‘cake.’ The mother was an energetic, clever woman, no doubt, but she had a large household, and kept much company, living in the most fashionable society of a wealthy neighbourhood ; yet she found time to educate her child, notwithstanding that a large younger family (she had eight living children when I saw her), added to her other cares, must have left her little time for such teaching. She made a practice of giving her deaf child two hours every morning, and with this instruction her daughter became a highly educated and agreeable woman in society. We spent the day at her father’s house, and a most accomplished woman we found her. She talked to my wife of pictures, poetry, and all manner of subjects common to ladies, such as needlework, &c. To me she talked of

riding (she was a great horsewoman), billiards, and other topics she thought would interest me, explaining the difference between their game of billiards and ours, giving me the names of the different woods the cues were made of, and conversing with me as freely as though she had been a hearing person ; indeed, several times during the day, my wife forgot that she was speaking to one deaf, so accurately did this deaf young lady read everything that was said to her when she could see the speaker's face ; but occasionally my wife, forgetting this, turned away, and, of course, received no answer. Yet, had she been sent to a ' French ' system school, all speech would have been lost. There would have been no attempt made to keep up, or restore, the speech of a child so young ; and one more would have been added to the long list of the dumb.

The next and last case of a semi-mute—well known, but which did not come under our own observation—is that of a man who went through part of the civil war in the United States as a private soldier. He spoke so well that for some time the secret of his deafness was undiscovered. One night, however, he was challenged by a sentry, and, taking no notice, was wounded. This led to discovery, and he had to leave the army. His early history is interesting and instructive, and I will give it almost in his own words as told to a friend of mine. He lost hearing through fever at five years of age, but retained his speech. His friends communicated with him by writing. One day sitting on the floor he watched his father and a neighbour talking, and when the neighbour left, he looked up and said, ' Did not Mr. ——— say so

and so ?' 'Yes,' said his father, 'How do you know, who told you?' 'Father, I saw his lips move, and I guessed that was what he said.' 'You had better practise watching people's lips,' his father said. The 'German' system was then unknown in America ; but the boy did practise, both with his family, and by studying his own lips before the glass. The only difficulty being that he soon discovered a difference in his own pronunciation of words ending in 'tion' as he called it 'ti-on,' and such like spellings, where the sound and the spelling did not agree. At twelve years of age he was sent to the American Asylum at Hartford, and for a whole year he could make absolutely nothing out of the signs and finger talking used around him. This made him very wretched. He continued to say his lessons aloud to the master, who questioned him on his fingers. One day going to his master for the meaning and pronunciation of some new and difficult word, the master in a fit of impatience at his not pronouncing it rightly wrote the word down, spelling it phonetically ; the boy at once gave it correctly, and his delight and joy were intense. Here was the key of knowledge. From that day he always went to others with his new words, with the request 'Spell it wrong ; spell it as it sounds,' and he had no more difficulty. He married a deaf and dumb woman, and had several children, all of whom heard. When these children were old enough, they were sent to school. Very soon a complaint came to the father from the teacher, his children were so remarkably impudent and naughty they would write nonsense on their slates instead of their exercises. They had been punished, but continued to bring such sentences

as this : ‘Man horse black on riding was,’ and, if he did not use his authority to stop this, the children must be expelled. He at once wrote, explaining that they had been in the habit of communicating chiefly with their deaf and dumb mother, who employed signs, and this inverted language was the consequence. If no notice were taken, but the children allowed to mix freely with their schoolfellows, he had no doubt their language would right itself, and so the event proved.

We now come to the last of the three classes of the so-called ‘deaf and dumb’—the toto-congenital. How these educated on the ‘German’ system were able, after leaving school, to get on in the world by articulation and lip-reading, was, you may remember, the great object of our inquiries. This point is all the more important now, as the advocates of the ‘French’ system allow, in theory, however little they carry it out in practice, the value of teaching articulation to most of the semi-mute and semi-deaf, but still deny the use of attempting it with toto-congenitals except in very rare instances.

Now as to those who have left the ‘German’ system schools. We saw specimens of these, some in workshops, some milliners, some married to hearing persons, some at home with their parents, some master tradesmen, &c., all, I again remark, were toto-congenital—such as would be termed in America, France, and England, ‘deaf and dumb.’ The result was encouraging beyond anything we had dared to hope. Had we expected to find old pupils that ‘one would not have known from hearing persons’ we should have been disappointed. There may be such, but we have never been able to trace any, nor

did we ever meet with a 'German' system teacher who knew of one—that is, a toto-congenital pupil, old or present, that habitually, or for any length of time, could pass as a hearing person. But what we did see were men and women, able to earn their own livelihood in trades and other occupations, communicating with and answering hearing persons sufficiently well by articulation and lip-reading to go through the world comfortably, and, in some instances, very successfully.

In no case were we unable to make ourselves understood or failed to understand in return, except when with those educated in a school where some signs were allowed, a large 'internat.' Just in proportion as signs were allowed in institutions, so those taught therein appeared to less advantage when we saw them in after life.

We asked their fellow-workmen, their employers, their workpeople, their relations, and those with whom they lodged, 'How do they communicate with hearing persons?' And were universally answered, often with embarrassing astonishment at such a question, 'Why, by speaking, of course!'

Let us take a few individual cases; that of the Dutch gentleman, who kindly allowed himself to be examined and tested in this room, and before the Social Science Congress at Leeds in 1871, is probably known to most here present. Of him Dr. E. M. Gallaudet, the Principal of the National College for Deaf-mutes, at Washington, U.S.A., not too willing a witness, declared that he and the Dutchman before mentioned had no difficulty in conversing together on various topics by word of mouth, not even the jolting of the cab on their way to the

station making any difference in the ease with which they understood each other.

But let us pass on to cases that came under our own notice. One, that of a poor woman living with an aunt, is worthy of special notice, showing as it does that the education given on the 'German' system is good, and not lost afterwards. She had left school some twelve years, and lived in a part of Germany where one of the many dialects prevailing in that country was spoken. Her aunt, a garrulous old woman, chattered at such a rate that my wife, though a good German scholar, was sometimes at fault, as was also the German lady who acted as my interpreter. More than once, when such was the case, my wife asked the deaf niece, whose purer German interpreted the sentence.

Another case was that of a young woman, who was a leading dressmaker in a small German capital. She was rather shy at first. On our mentioning this to the landlord of the hotel where we were staying, he called the hotel porter, who was engaged to the deaf dressmaker, and told him we had not found his sweetheart very communicative. Whereupon the porter begged we would, escorted by himself, give her another trial. So off we started, but met the young woman soon after we left the hotel. The meeting of the two lovers was most amusing. He took her roundly to task for appearing to so little advantage on our first acquaintance, and, after some lively sparring—rattled off between them just as though both, instead of one only, had been hearing persons—we chimed in, and had a long and pleasant talk. She assured us that, in following her occupation,

the only means of communication between herself and those who employed her were articulation and lip-reading. Writing was never had recourse to; finger-talking and signs she did not understand. Take another case.

We saw in Vienna a fancy leather merchant, who employed seventy men under him, whose premises the Emperor and Empress of Austria visited before the great Vienna Exhibition, who could not only speak the language of his country fluently, but also a little English, who had visited England and other countries, was a practical horticulturist, and altogether an agreeable, intelligent, wealthy man—wealthy through his own educated talents and industry.

A good instance of the independence which pupils, well educated on this system, feel in after life, was mentioned to me last year. A journeyman cabinet-maker had such a thorough command of language, that he told my friend he intended to seek work in other countries, and should settle in whichever he found gave him best employment, having no doubt of being able soon to talk the new language sufficiently. Not to weary you with more of the many other instances one could give, I will end this part by telling you that we went into a hatter's shop in Friedberg, who had a totocongenital deaf workman. That very morning a man had been convicted for theft, principally on the evidence, given *vivâ voce* in open court, by that deaf workman, who stood the test of examination and cross-examination without any other method of communication being used than word of mouth.

After what you have just heard of the power of the

‘German’ system, does it not seem strange that its introduction into this country should have been opposed so strongly? Yet the same prejudice against the value of the system—taking the twofold form, either of utter disbelief in the power of the deaf to speak, because they are called ‘deaf and dumb’; or, on the other hand, the deep-rooted idea that speech, when thus given, is not better than that of the parrot, or the magpie—is widespread, as the following will show.

A gentleman in America had a child who lost hearing in her fifth year; he took her to the best institutions that he knew of in his own country. These were on the ‘French’ system. He was there told he had better take her back, and bring her again when she was twelve. ‘What,’ said he, ‘must she be seven years without any education? And what is to become of her speech? She has already lost some of her words.’ ‘Oh! that will soon be gone, and in a few months she will be as dumb as she is deaf.’ The parents were greatly hurt at this, and resolved that her speech should never be lost, a resolve which they succeeded in carrying out, by means of studying the ‘German’ system. Finding the great benefit their child received from this method of teaching, the father endeavoured to get a school established on this principle. For this purpose he applied for State aid—which is, I believe, freely afforded for the education of the deaf in every civilised country but our own. His application was refused. Twice his proposition was defeated in Congress; and it was not until he had publicly exhibited the success of the system in the person of his own child, that the measure was passed. The

opposition was led by a member of Congress, who himself had a toto-congenital deaf and dumb child.

When I was in America the school was large and flourishing; one of the warmest supporters, and most active members of its committee, being the very Congressman who had so long and successfully opposed its foundation. He told me himself that he felt he could never do enough to further the 'German' system, in order to make amends for having kept its benefits from his native State so long.

Now, we will go to a very different part of the world, and give you an instance of the prejudice which did exist against this system in Switzerland. For this purpose I will quote from the able report of Mr. A. A. Kinsey, made of a school at Riehen. He is the gentleman who has qualified himself by residence and practical instruction, in the best German schools in Germany, to preside over the proposed training college for teachers of this system in England:—

'In a little village called Riehen, about four English miles from Bale, in Switzerland, is to be found a most excellent school for the education of the deaf. I cannot refrain from advising anyone reading or listening to the following story, if at some future time they happen to find themselves at Bale, to drive over to Riehen and visit the 'Deaf and Dumb Institution' there. I promise them that they will be most cordially received, and what is far more to the purpose, greatly astonished at what can be done with children stone deaf from birth.

'This school has been in existence now thirty-six years, and is prosperous, but at the commencement of its

career, such could not be said of it ; in fact, Mr. Wilhelm D. Arnold, the admirable head of this school, could with but the greatest difficulty and economy make both ends meet. Persons accustomed to support charitable institutions pooh-pooled it, looked upon it as the idea of a visionary, a waste of money, which might with greater advantage be used elsewhere. Foremost among such persons was a rich merchant of Bale, named Merian. This gentleman had occasion very often to visit Mr. Arnold at Riehen on business not connected with the school. On each of these visits at the conclusion of the work in hand, Mr. Arnold would endeavour to interest his wealthy friend in the school, but always without success. He sighed to think how easily this rich man could place them out of all their pecuniary troubles, could he be but once convinced of the genuineness of the education. But how to do it was the question. He had talked, argued, quoted in favour of his school, had invited Mr. Merian to see and hear for himself. But, no ; Mr. Merian had no time to waste in such an absurd manner ; he was a strict man of business, and the moment his business with Mr. Arnold was at an end, he would step into his carriage and be driven back to Bale. One day, Mr. Merian, being, let us suppose, in a very good humour, or Mr. Arnold's entreaties to him to visit the schoolrooms being more than usually strong, he consented just to give five minutes of his valuable time to an examination of the children. Crossing from the dwelling-house to the school he grumbled out, 'You know it's all nonsense, Arnold ; you know very well, as well as I do, that these children just talk like so many trained parrots ; I don't deny they do talk, never did, but I simply repeat they

talk like parrots, and it's a downright waste of time teaching them to do so.' 'Well, well,' said Arnold, 'you come and judge for yourself.' Mr. Merian continued, 'I never could understand how a man like you, so thoroughly conscientious and honest in all other respects, should be mixed up with such humbug, such charlatanry as this.' 'Pray don't use hard words,' said Arnold, 'until you have satisfied yourself by proof that they are deserved.' Both gentlemen then entered one of the class-rooms together; all the children present rose, and greeted them with a 'Good day.' Mr. Merian broke out at once, 'There, I knew it, I told you what it would be, "good day," "good night," "pretty poll."' A boy came up to him with a chair, saying, 'Will you be pleased to sit down, sir?' Mr. Merian sat down, but without thanking the boy for his politeness. What was the use of thanking one who couldn't understand (?), a parrot in fact, but said, 'Oh! yes, it's all very clever, Arnold; the boy has been well trained in his lesson, but you can't blind me.' Mr. Arnold said to the class, 'This is Mr. Merian, of Bale.' Several children repeated the name and bowed to him. This gentleman, however, broke out again, 'There, there, I can't stop any longer; it is nothing more than what I expected.' 'Well, one moment, if you must go,' said Mr. Arnold, 'while I ask the children one or two questions.' Turning to the class, he said, 'Did you see Mr. Merian come this morning?' 'Yes, we did,' answered several. 'Did he arrive on foot?' 'No.' 'How, then?' 'He came in his carriage.' Mr. Merian sat up in his chair, and paid somewhat more attention. 'Has Mr. Merian's carriage one or two horses?' 'Two horses.' Mr. Merian said hastily, 'Now, Arnold, you are

deceiving me ; you are telling them all this in some secret way.' 'Oh, no,' said Mr. Arnold, 'I never make use of signs or the finger alphabet ; and if I did, I am truly happy to say my pupils wouldn't understand me : besides, see, my hands are behind my back.' He went on, 'What colour are the horses ?' 'One is brown, with a white face, and the other is grey.' Mr. Merian jumped up, saying, 'This is very curious,' looking from Mr. Arnold to the boy who had last spoken, and appearing puzzled. 'This is really very curious ; one might easily be deceived into fancying that the child was really thinking.' Mr. Arnold, without answering, went on, 'Why does Mr. Merian ride in his own carriage, instead of walking or going by cart, as we do ?' 'Because Mr. Merian is a very rich man, and can afford to ride in his carriage.' 'Why, Arnold, the child is thinking, I declare !' cried out the gentleman. 'Of course he is,' replied Mr. Arnold, quietly ; 'they all think and express their ideas as you and I do. True, not in such finished language, because at present their vocabulary, like that of all children, is limited ; but I hope, by the time they are confirmed, they will be able to express themselves in as perfect language (if not more so) as do their parents and relatives.' 'Well, put some more questions,' said Mr. Merian. This was done, and after half-an-hour he said, 'Arnold, why didn't you tell me about this before ? Why did you leave me under such an erroneous impression ?' 'My good friend,' answered Mr. Arnold, 'if I have told you once, I have told you a hundred times.' 'Yes, but you should have explained the matter properly to me, so that I could have understood it. But, there, I will come and see your school again to-morrow. I feel

quite interested in the poor little things, since I find they can talk rationally.' He did so, and during the next month, he was to be found for several hours, twice a week, listening to the pupils. The first time he put some questions vocally to one of the children, and received an answer, his delight was boundless. He felt almost that he was the wonderful instructor of the child, that he had placed the little deaf boy before him, far above the reach of his sad affliction, and had given him the power to see that which others hear; that he himself had restored to the poor boy the Divine gift of human speech, temporarily lost, but which for the untiring aid and skill of his teachers, would have been lost indeed for ever.

'From that moment Mr. Merian made a resolution, and his resolution was good. He gave 32,000 florins for the purpose of educating six pupils annually; and lent his most willing assistance and influence to the method of instruction he had so long, through unreasoning prejudice, condemned and despised.'

A similar noble instance is recorded in America, where a Mr. Clarke most liberally endowed the institution at Northampton, Mass., named after him, though in that country such support is the less wanted, on account of the State aid which is afforded to institutions for the deaf. Let us hope to find in this far richer country some such munificent benefactors.

Briefly to recapitulate some of the conclusions to which our investigations led us, we find that the 'French' system schools, to a limited extent, will always be wanted for those who cannot be educated on the 'German' system, viz., the weak in intellect, and the very few whose speech,

had they been hearing persons, would have been scarcely intelligible.

All others should be educated on the 'German' system. And it should be borne in mind that it is for the poor that education on this system is so especially desirable. Important as it is to all, to the poor the gift of speech is of intense value, enabling them to make themselves understood to the world at large.

So far as to the system. How should it be carried out? At home when possible, which should be the case wherever a mother or elder sister could devote the time and patience necessary, or under a private governess.

Failing home education, small day-schools are to be strongly recommended, being preferable to large ones, and large ones preferable to boarding schools or institutions, the object being to render the deaf akin to hearing persons in their tastes, habits, and inclinations—their friendships and marriages—to enable them to be absorbed into general society, instead of forming them, as the 'French' method does, into a body alien and apart from the speaking world.

How is this to be accomplished?

Five years ago, at the end of the able paper read by Sir George (then Dr.) Dasent before your Society, from this place, he said that an association had been formed for the purpose of starting a day-school on the 'German' system, and that, with your sympathy, the association felt assured of success. His words have been fully realised. A school, such as he described, was started, which is the now excellent and flourishing one in Fitzroy Square. Excellent, however, as it is, a single school it remains. This should

not be so ; but others, perhaps smaller ones, should be established throughout the country.

That there is need of immediate action in this matter you will allow, when you know that little more than half our deaf are educated at all—what a bitter practical commentary on our boasted civilisation !—while only about 100 of those under instruction are taught on the ‘German’ system. This leaves from 1,500 to 2,000 to be gathered in, without touching existing schools and institutions.

An association is now being formed, which will, we hope, help to spread the blessings of this system throughout the length and breadth of the land. In order to accomplish this, the first necessity is to have a supply of trained teachers. A training college is therefore about to be started, where Relations of the deaf can obtain training, Governesses can be taught, and Masters and Mistresses for schools supplied.

As this honourable Society, five years ago, generously assisted the school then proposed into public notice and recognition, so I feel sure that the good which resulted therefrom will be widely extended, by affording to the training college now proposed a like assistance, to the incalculable benefit of so many utterly neglected, and terribly unfortunate, of our fellow-beings.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said the main point for discussion seemed to be whether the German system was the best.

The Rev. S. SMITH said he desired, as Chaplain of the Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb, and Minister of St. Saviour's Church, Oxford Street, to say a few words on the other side of the question. They were much indebted to Mr. Ackers for going so deeply into the question, and he was entirely in favour of the deaf being taught to speak and read from the lips as much as possible, but he advocated the combined system. It was said by some that the two systems could not be carried on together, but he could prove the contrary. He had a pupil at the present moment who could both use the finger and the sign language, and also speak and read from the lips, though, of course, he was not quite so *au fait* at the latter as those who were confined to that method. He was in favour of the finger and sign language, because of the rapid progress which could be made with it in the first few years of instruction, though he knew it was contended on the other side that the progress was not so rapid afterwards as in those who could speak. The sign language was especially necessary for the adults who had never learned any other, and amongst whom he had laboured for the last twenty-two years in London. A sermon or lecture could never be understood by a large assemblage of deaf persons, especially if the speaker wore a beard or moustache, like Mr. Ackers. Their language must always be somewhat limited; they could not follow, therefore, the metaphors and rhetoric employed in the pulpit, and he defied any deaf person to follow a sustained discourse of half-an-hour. But he knew that the deaf and dumb in London had derived very much consolation, instruction, and recreation from the sermons and lectures de-

livered to them in the finger and sign language. These people would always congregate together; previously to the establishment of the institution he represented, they would meet at public-houses, but they all acknowledged that there had been a great improvement in their moral condition since these special services had been started. It had come to his knowledge that the adult deaf and dumb in Berlin, who would meet together for lectures, &c., were now complaining of their want of cultivated sign language for effective communication. He lately saw two deaf Germans in Mayence who conversed orally with hearing friends, but he noticed that with one another they preferred the finger and sign language. In the highest interests of the adult deaf and dumb, therefore, he must most earnestly plead for the retention of the finger and sign language.

Mr. COOKE mentioned several cases which had come within his knowledge, where deaf persons had been able to communicate by the lips, and in no other way.

Mr. A. M. SKINNER, Q.C., Treasurer of Lincoln's Inn, remarked that, in proportion as they valued the gift of hearing and of speech, should they compassionate those from whom these blessings had been withheld or withdrawn. He had listened with great interest to Mr. Smith, who endeavoured to support the convenience of signs; but, after all, the argument seemed to come to this—If you cannot get the best tools, use the best you can get. Possibly there was a greater facility in this off-hand mode of feeling one's way to the intelligence of others, but these communications must depend on the special training of those who were to make and receive them. He remembered, many years ago, visiting a noble lord who had been afflicted with deafness from childhood, in consequence of fever. He could read and write English and French very well; but he found that at the dinner-table her ladyship kept up the conversation with him by means of signs, and thus informed him what his guests were saying. Now, if a man always had a sympathising and capable wife opposite him, this might answer pretty well; but if he had learned to articulate, and read from the lips of others, he would not have been so dependent, and could

have conversed with those around the table much more freely. Another important feature about this method was that it contemplated beginning the education of the young at the earliest possible moment, when all the vocal organs were still flexible and capable of adapting themselves to exigencies to which they might be applied. Where this was neglected, and the organs became stiffened and impaired by want of use, no doubt signs were the only means left. Before sitting down he might mention that one of his cottage tenants, a widow, had a boy, a deaf mute, who had never been taught, and though he was tender and affectionate to his parents, and could communicate with them to some extent, he could not do so to other persons; and, owing to this want of social intercourse and consequent restraint, he was liable to fits of most ungovernable rage. Now he looked upon life very much as an occasion for enjoyment, and loss of temper, therefore, is one of the heaviest grievances which could befall a man. It was to remove this great evil of isolation from social influences that Mr. Ackers was striving, and he most heartily wished him every success.

Miss HULL said she had been teaching the deaf and dumb for the last fourteen years, originally on the combined system, but for the last four years she had given it up. She had no idea previously that it was possible to teach a child born deaf to speak, and therefore had only attempted to keep up the knowledge of spoken language in those who had once possessed it; but as soon as she found it was possible to do so she commenced instructing even congenital deaf mutes in the same way, and now used no other method, because she found that those who were accustomed to watch the fingers would not give that undivided attention to the lips which was necessary. She found her pupils improved very much in language from going home to their friends, and at the age of 11 or 12 they were able to converse freely with their brothers and sisters. They were thus, in effect, restored to society, and their affliction was almost extinguished. With reference to the persons named by Mr. Smith, she believed that they had been educated at Berlin under the combined system, and therefore they were not fair

specimens of the real German system. Her own pupils had the greatest commiseration for persons who were dumb, and repudiated with horror the idea of such an appellation being applied to them. She was confident if this system were more widely followed, immense advantage would ensue.

Mr. M. S. DIPNALL said he was associated with an institution which had the largest endowed charity for the blind in England, and he therefore came in contact with a great many afflicted persons. He had been visited by a graduate of Cambridge University, who was not only deaf but blind, but he brought with him an intelligent lad, who, by touching his fingers, could convey to him what was said. This was one instance which showed that something beyond lip-reading was required, and the remarks of Mr. Smith showed that there were a great many adult deaf mutes for whom the finger and sign language was still a necessity. Therefore, while offering his warmest thanks to Mr. Ackers, he did not think they should confine themselves to lip-reading as the only channel by which to reach the intelligence of the deaf and dumb.

Mr. A. KINSEY remarked that it was not wished in any way to interfere with existing institutions conducted on the sign system. There were a certain number of deaf mutes who, by reason of weak intellect, and others who, from the additional deprivation of sight, must still be educated on the French system. In answer to a remark made by Mr. Smith, he did not conceive it was at all necessary that large congregations of the deaf should be collected in a church for religious instruction which could be imparted to them in other ways. He believed that an easy sermon could be easily followed by a moderate number; for he had been present at two confirmations in Germany, where the whole of the service was conducted orally, there being sixty or seventy deaf persons present, the greater part of whom at any rate followed all that was said by the officiating clergyman. Anyone speaking to the deaf must speak deliberately, and without gesticulation, which would throw as great difficulties in the way of being understood as to ask anyone to read from a book which you kept moving about before his eyes. He also thought it was open to question

whether a sermon conveyed in the sign and pantomime language was perfectly understood; at least, he knew that in many instances this was not the case, and persons unacquainted with the deaf-mute method of instruction would be astonished at reading the curious result of such sermons written down by the auditors or rather spectators. He might mention that Mr. Ackers had treated the historical and medical aspects of the question very fully in a lecture which he delivered before the Gloucester Literary and Scientific Institution last autumn. The medical aspect of the question was very interesting, especially to mothers, who often unwittingly did their children much injury. When deaf children were taught to speak, they were less likely to associate with others similarly afflicted, and consequently to intermarry with them, and this was a great advantage. It would be better if they did not marry at all, but this could not be expected; Dr. Peet had calculated that the chance of the offspring of such unions being deaf was about 1 in 130, whilst Dr. Buxton put it at 1 in 135; but when two deaf mutes intermarried, the chance was 1 in 10 that their children would also be deaf. Besides, there were other evils arising from both parents being deaf. Dr. Buxton mentioned one case where a child of such parents learned the most horrible language from the bargemen on a canal near where he lived, which the parents were not aware of; and several instances had occurred of accidents to children from neither parent hearing their cries, or being aware of approaching danger. There were at present in this country upwards of 2,000 deaf children receiving absolutely no education at all. Through want of any education, and through want of a proper means of communication, even when education had been given, it was not surprising that 1 in every 25 of the deaf mutes found a resting-place in the work-house, as shown by the last Census Returns.

Dr. EDM. SYMES THOMPSON said they had as yet heard but little of the medical aspect of the question, but that was very strongly in favour of the German system, and he would mention two or three of the numerous facts which might be brought forward. His speciality was not aural surgery, but diseases of

the chest, and he had had an opportunity of noticing that a large number of deaf mutes suffered from such diseases. And this fact had an intimate connection with their being mute, but not with their being deaf, simply from their not using their vocal organs. It followed, therefore, that if they were taught to speak, the danger of lung disease would be lessened. Then, again, those who did not speak had a habit generally of breathing through the mouth instead of through the nose, and thus the cold air passed directly to the lungs, instead of being warmed, moistened, and filtered from dust in the nasal passages, as Nature intended. He would not confine this to those who were born deaf, for he had known several instances of children who had learned to speak having lost that faculty in consequence of deafness. As a rule, if hearing was lost at the age of six, speech was lost as well. This method of instruction in articulation would also be of great advantage in the case of children with hare lip and cleft palate, where the voice became harsh and unpleasant from being directed through the nasal passages. For these and other reasons he desired, on behalf of the medical profession, to bear testimony to the value of the German system, and especially in behalf of having a large number of efficiently trained teachers rather than increasing the number of schools. He hoped next week to draw special attention to this subject in a course of lectures he was about to give at Gresham College, and he should lose no opportunity of pressing it on the attention of the profession.

Mr. ACKERS, in reply, acknowledged the courteous manner in which this paper had been received, even by those who did not agree in all its conditions, and said he on his part should be very sorry to say anything unkind towards those who were promoting any system which they believed to be the best for the welfare of the deaf and dumb. It was, however, a mistake on the part of Mr. Smith to suppose that a deaf person could not understand what was said by a person wearing a beard and moustache, as he could show him if he would honour him with a visit. It was simply a question of habit and education; his daughter could understand him as readily as she could her

mother. Mr. Skinner had very forcibly depicted the unhappy condition of those who were totally uneducated, and much as he valued the German system, he would vastly prefer that such persons were taught to converse by signs rather than not at all. After thanking Miss Hull for her valuable testimony in favour of the German system, he said, in reference to Mr. Dipnall's remarks, that he was quite aware of the necessity of sign language being adopted in some cases. He would not interfere with anyone who had learned that system, but he would not allow in any school, on the German system, with which he was connected, any pupil who had been for a year under the combined system. That must still be continued for adults, and those who had begun with it; and he was, in fact, a supporter to a small extent of more than one institution conducted on that system; but he contended that the other was vastly superior for young children, who had to commence their education.

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Ackers, said he was quite satisfied of the superiority of the German system, and he should do all that lay in his power to support it.

The motion was carried unanimously, and the proceedings terminated.



Training College for Teachers of the Deaf.

“GERMAN” SYSTEM.

As President of the above Society, allow me to press on your attention the following facts. I am informed by the Honorary Secretary that at present only about one-half are being educated at all, and scarce a hundred receive the benefits of the “German” System, by which the Dumb are taught to speak.

The accompanying papers will more fully describe this valuable system.

Funds are urgently needed for its further development amongst us.

A. C. CANTUAR.

A LIVING DEATH.

Will you picture to yourself a scene near a life's commencement—such as yours or mine—of a mother and her baby? Its tiny fingers wrestle with her hair; its sparkling eyes and dimpled cheeks, its crowings and croonings, are her heart's delight: they play together, laugh together, yes, talk together in baby language all day long; what companions will they not be, these two, a little later; every day growing dearer, in a love strong as death.

So God meant it to be; so it shall be, speaking roughly, in fifteen hundred cases as against one; and that one! think of it. No less happy is this mother with her child; the child with her. But after a time someone suggests a question: "Why doesn't baby begin to talk?" "Oh, it's too young yet." "But mine," says the visitor, "talks quite plainly, though it is a month younger." "Well, it will come in time; better be backward!" But *nothing* comes—only to the happy mother a slow awakening and a bitter cry.—"Oh, nurse; so backward as this? Better never born! Better dead!"

God help those two. God give them grace to bear up against the ever sundering years; because the tender, wooing voice of the mother shall be unknown to the child; the longed for and expected accents of the child shall be denied the poor mother. That early teaching at the knee of love, obedience, faith in God and man, it may not be for her to instil into the little heart. What wonder, if soon the baby-laughter dies away, the dimpling smiles grow rare and disappear: the lonely life shrinks inward into death—a living death!

Take another case. A child of tender years has been stricken down by malignant fever. After weeks of anxious prayer and watching the glimmering of reason is perceived again. The dear child's voice, so long disguised in delirium, has found itself once more, and talks of childish things; the blue eyes are open, themselves again. Over him the mother bends with grateful heart; she kisses the precious lips, and murmurs words of love. But, hush! Why are the corners working of the little mouth? What, the while, is that piteous little voice saying? "Mother, darling, do speak to me; do sing to me." "Yes, my boy; what shall I sing?" "Mother, why don't you answer? Why do your lips move, and I can't hear? O mother, mother, why is it all so quiet?"

Do you who read pity that burst of mother's anguish, and that child's still wonderment, which reveal the truth,—DEAF; soon to be DUMB! It is the old story again, but for help from without: gradually, while the mother watches and weeps, that little voice fades away like a dying echo, until the childish prattle is hushed as in the grave; and in this sorrowful world of ours there is one more heart vacant, and one more life sad. God's will be done.

Only, let us be quite sure what God's will is. His will—if He reveals it through the working of the mind He gave us, and we are sure He does,—His will is, that these dear children of His and ours, whether they be born deaf or rendered so by sickness, should not for that reason be estranged from their fellow men.

They are DEAF, indeed, but we may teach them to read our moving lips, and thus reach, undistorted, our spoken thoughts.

And, except through lack of culture, they are not DUMB, for they may be trained, in the one case to make use of, in the other not to lose the power of speech, which mere deafness does not destroy: both may acquire our spoken language, and may join therefore in our thoughts and pursuits, and share, through God's goodness, in our pleasures.

It is not for me here to compare the rival systems of education;—to plead as I would gladly do, for voice and language, as against silentness and signs, and isolation in the outer world. Thank God and good workers for all teaching, and speed the best. Help is urgently needed. Because, in Great Britain, *scarcely more than half* of the “Deaf” and “Deaf and Dumb” are educated at all!

You, then, who are happy, healthy, prosperous, in whatever degree, you who hear earth’s music and its pleasant voices, let your Willingness go forth, in this cause, to meet the Will of God.

If He has spared you these or such like trials, make that immunity the spur to prick the sides of your intent, and thank Him, not wordily! Do something; your best; after the example of that Great One, who made the Deaf to hear and the Dumb to speak,—took the little ones in His arms and blessed them,—and caused the mother’s heart to sing for joy.

H. G. W.





